3/9/99

DRAFT

MEPA/NEPA/HB495 GENERIC CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of Proposed State Action** Purchase the Sekokini Springs Trout Farm hatchery building and improvements and assume US Forest Service Lease for Department use of the facility to produce westslope cutthroat trout for the Hungry Horse Mitigation Program.

2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action** Section 87-1-209 grants the FWP the right to lease land [from USFS]. Section 87-1-222 allows FWP to operate the hatchery and associated buildings.

3. **Name of Project** Sekokini Springs Natural Fish Rearing Project

4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)**
This project is funded by Bonneville Power Administration:
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208

5. **If Applicable:**

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date N/A - existing facility
Estimated Completion Date ___
Current Status of Project Design (% complete) ___

6. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**
Flathead County, Montana
Township 31 North, Range 19 West, Section 17, PMM
Building and improvements on 11.4 acres in NE 1/4.
Property of US Forest Service

7. **Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

(a) Developed:
residential .... 0.25 acres
industrial .... 0.5 acres

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation ..... 0 acres

(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas ..... 11.4 acres

(d) Floodplain ..... 0 acres

(e) Productive:
irrigated cropland ..... 0 acres
dry cropland ..... 0 acres
forestry ..... 0 acres
rangeland ..... 0 acres
other (fish ponds/streams) 6.0 acres

8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would**

be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.

The hatchery portion of the Hungry Horse Mitigation program is presently in transition to experimental culture of native species as directed by the Hungry Horse Mitigation Plan (MFWP and CSKT 1991) and Implementation Plan (1993). The Northwest Power Planning Council (NPPC) approved the plans and amended their Columbia Basin Fish ans Wildlife Program (Measure 10.3A, NPPC 1995).

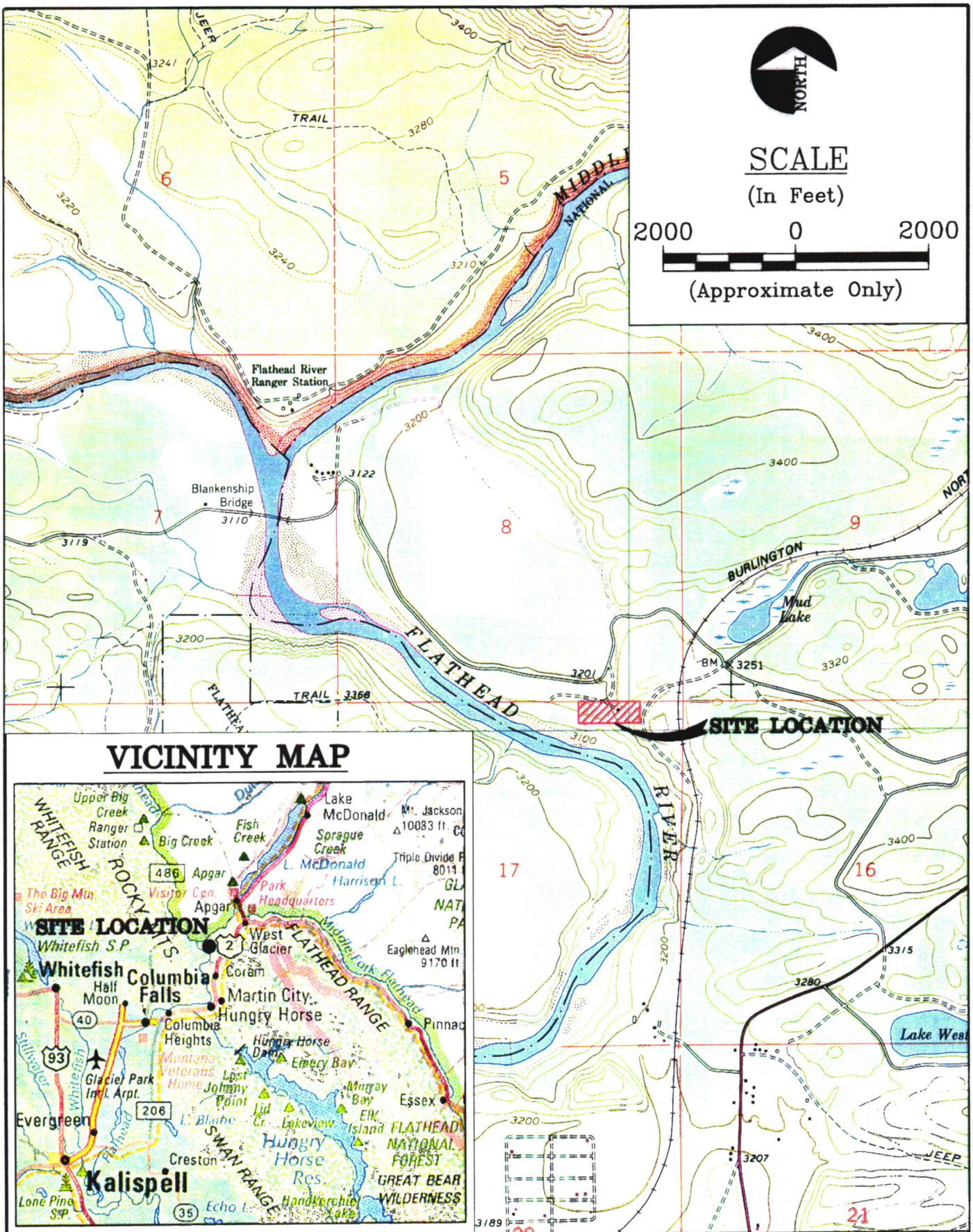
The privately owned Sekokini Springs Trout Farm has potential to become a primary focus of our native species recovery program. The site offers a unique combination of natural habitat for onsite restoration work and a small trout rearing facility. Four natural springs of varying water temperatures and the isolated setting provide an opportunity for small scale, experimental rearing of native species under natural habitat conditions.

We plan to assume the lease for the land and purchase existing improvements at the site. The existing improvements are privately owned on land belonging to the U.S. Forest Service (Forest). For two generations (40 years), the private trout farm has existed through a lease agreement with the Forest. The facility is presently owned and operated by the founder's son, Mr. Cary King of 5850 Rabe Road, Columbia Falls, MT 59912. Mr. King has offered to sell the improvements on the Forest lease.

In the interim, FWP and Mr. King have cosigned a personal services contract for $600 per month (Jan. through Mar.) and $1200 per month (Apr. through June) to allow the Hungry Horse Mitigation Implementation Group (IG) to rear westslope cutthroat for our Hungry Horse Mitigation Program. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is presently operating the Sekokini Springs facility as a cooperator under the direction of the IG. Trout eggs were transferred to the site in July 1997 for hatching and rearing after a thorough disease inspection by the FWP Fish Health Specialist. The existing personal services contract expires in June 1998 to allow the IG to rear westslope cutthroat at the site until environmental conditions are suitable for out planting. This agreement provided time to complete purchase arrangements. Optimally, fish presently at the site would be reared beyond June 1998 contingent on the purchase of the facility.

The improvements consist of a steel building with hatchery facilities in the back and living quarters in the front. The facility also has one open sided wood storage shed, four cement fish tanks, approximately nine earthen trout ponds and two sediment ponds. The pond system has not been fully utilized in recent years. Most of the ponds have wooden planks at the outlets to control water levels and screens over the culverts leading to other ponds. Water has been routed through the complex to achieve the most direct drainage path to the Flathead River. The two sediment ponds are fitted with concrete outlet controls and piping to the Flathead River. Water exits the facility through two screened outlet culverts in each of the two sediment ponds and small vegetated seeps located north and south of the ponds.

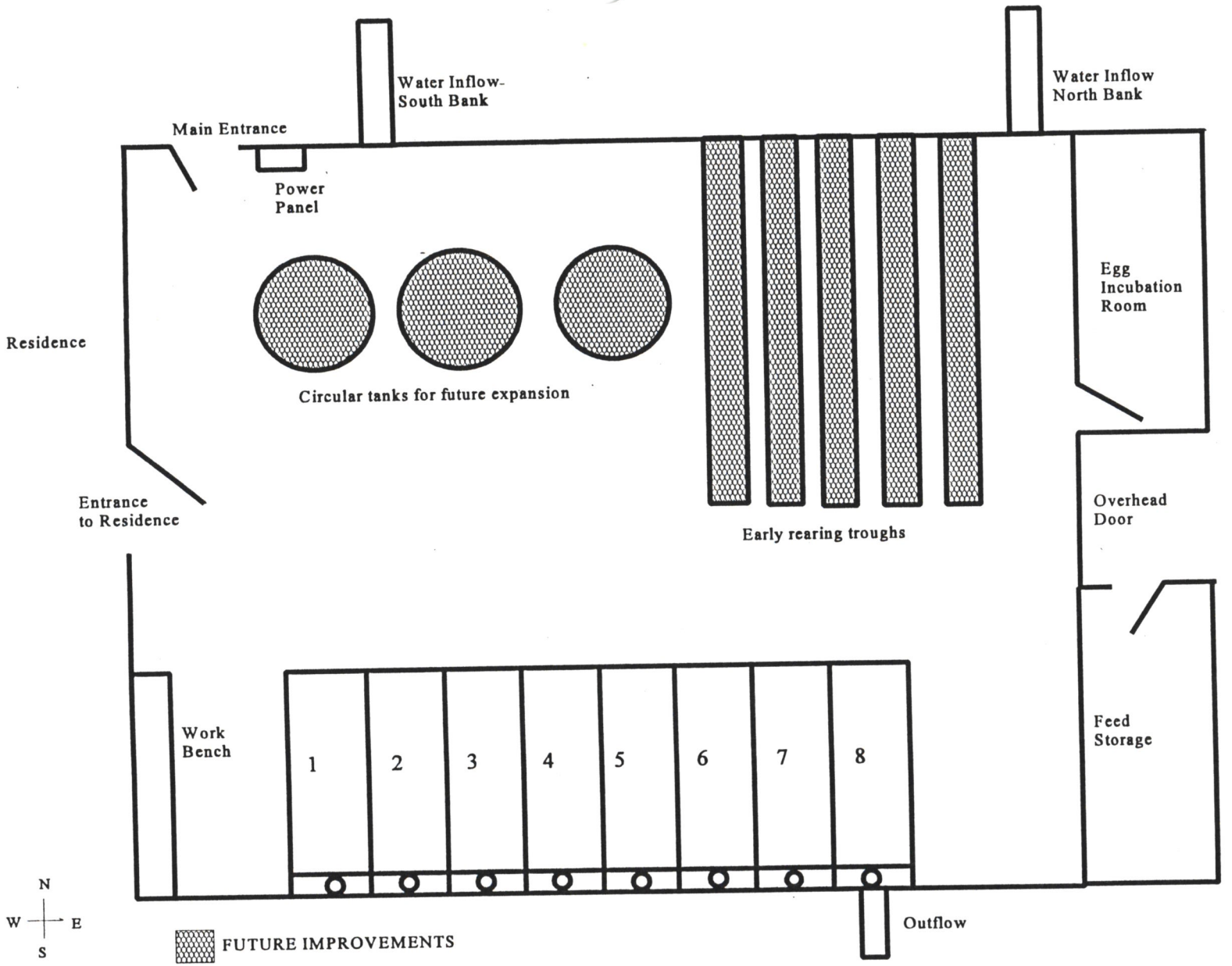
The steel building, built in 1979, is 42 by 60 feet with 16 foot walls and a concrete floor. The hatchery portion is approximately 40 by 42 feet, with a 12 by 12 foot fiberglass overhead door and a standard steel door for access. The interior walls are unfinished and contain 7 tinted windows on the north and south for light. This area is fully wired and plumbed, but not to modern code. Four cement fish tanks are 6'6" x 12 feet in dimension and 3 feet deep, pre-made septic tanks with outlets on the bottom for drainage. The tanks were installed in 1981. On each side of the overhead door are two metal sheds attached to the main structure. The shed on the northeast corner can be directly accessed through the steel building and has been used as an incubation room. The shed on the southeast corner is accessed by a steel door on the outside and is used for storage. The front 20 feet is utilized for living quarters. The upstairs contains three bedrooms and one bathroom. The lower level is an open area containing a kitchen and living-dining room and one bathroom. This area is finished with sheetrock and painted and the floors are carpeted and tiled. The home is heated by a large wood burning stove. This area could be used as office space for personnel operating the facility.



VICINITY MAP

SEKOKINI SPRINGS HATCHERY PROPERTY PHASE I ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	**SITE LOCATION AND VICINITY MAP**	**FIGURE** **1**

UPDATE TIME: 1:00PM
065\0864\065\0072\HEL\012198\I:\STORAGE\86498A01.DWG



SEKOKINI SPRINGS HATCHERY BUILDING

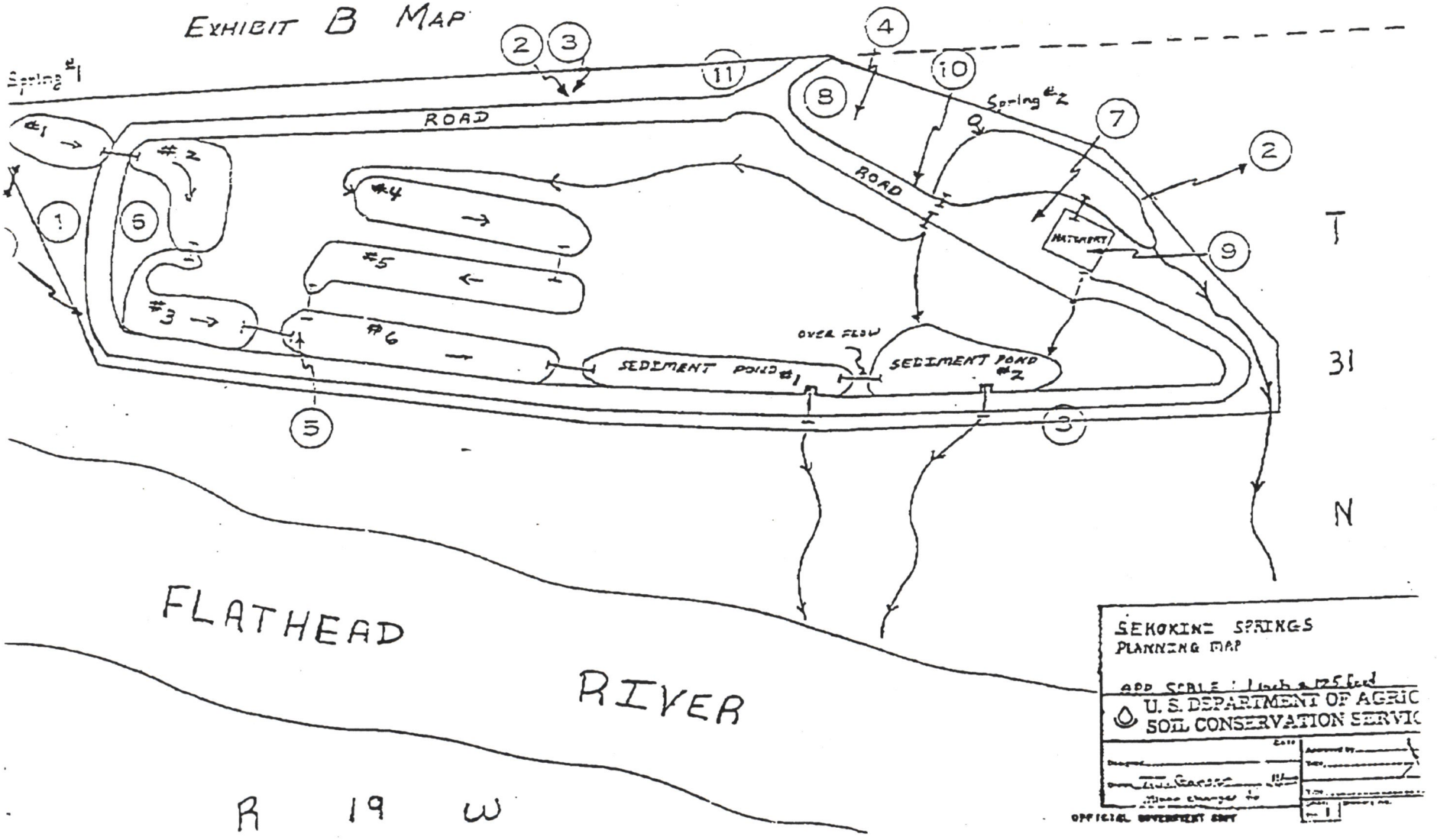


EXHIBIT B MAP
Spring #1
ROAD
#1
#2
#3
#4
#5
#6
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
Spring #2
ROAD
NATURAL
OVER FLOW
SEDIMENT POND #1
SEDIMENT POND #2
T
31
N
FLATHEAD
RIVER
R 19 W
SEKOKINE SPRINGS
PLANNING MAP
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRIC
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVIC

The open-sided shed is approximately 12 by 12 feet, 12 feet high in the front and sloping to 8 feet high in the rear. Rough pine and 2 x 4's were used for the sides and metal sheeting serves as the roof. This covered area can be used for equipment storage.

Initially, our goal is to negotiate a long-term lease and Special Use Permit with the Forest and purchase the improvements for FWP use . Non-native rainbow trout held at the facility are believed to have escaped to the Flathead River over time due to pond overflow, and absent or improperly maintained outlet screens. Fish escapement is possible even at state-of-the-art facilities. During the period the trout farm was in operation, rainbow trout became established in the Flathead River. A wild, self-sustaining population presently exists. The highest concentration of rainbow trout reside in the reach from Sekokini Springs downstream to Eleanor Island, approximately 24 km. Non-native rainbow can hybridize with native westslope cutthroat. Although the rainbow spawning run (early April) typically begins nearly a month earlier than westslope cutthroat (May), the two species may hybridize. Juveniles of both species rear in their natal tributaries for 1 to 4 years. Some direct, intra-specific competition is likely where native and non-native species rear in the same habitat. The established population in the Flathead River poses a threat to the genetic integrity of cutthroat in the watershed. By assuming the lease and obtaining the facility, fisheries managers can assure that species held at the facility are genetically compatible with native species in the Flathead River.

10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#
US Forest Service	Special Use Permit	Current Owner 1/1/98
US Forest Service	Property Lease	Current Owner 1/1/98

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Bonneville Power Administration	$78,000.00 via USFWS Mitigation Budget

Funding will transfer ownership of improvements to Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Care of hatchery and fish products

11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:

US Forest Service
Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks Hatchery Division
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Bonneville Power Administration
Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority
Northwest Power Planning Council
Hydrometrics, Inc.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A. Evaluation of the Impacts of the Proposed Action Including Secondary and Cumulative Impacts on the Physical and Human Environment:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Other: This EA includes the administrative change of the special use permit and purchase of improvements only		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

After obtaining the lease and purchasing the improvements, the Hungry Horse Mitigation Program will pursue habitat improvements at the site. Future actions will necessitate additional NEPA/MEPA documentation.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality?		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or temperature patterns, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (continued)

3. WATER **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity or pathogens?			X		Yes	Hatchery Fish will use Oxygen
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in the risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Violation of the Montana Non Degradation Statute?		X				
j. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
k. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
l. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
m. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Water flow through the facility will not change from current or past practices at the existing Trout Farm Facility.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (continued)

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			Pond operation
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered plant species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Regulation of pond elevations may flood terrestrial vegetation on the pond margins and increase the range of aquatic vegetation and riparian vegetation. This is not a change from current or past operation of the facility.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X			Change to native fish species (WCT)
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Restoration of native westslope cutthroat trout at the site was beneficial to native populations downstream of the facility. Historically, non-native rainbow trout were able to escape to the Flathead River where they could potentially hybridize with native cutthroat.

***Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.**

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X			Change from private ownership
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				Improved educational resource
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?			X			Shift from private domicile to office space
e. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Future plans for the site include educational interpretation site for native species restoration in the Flathead River system.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		X	Hatchery disease treatment chemicals
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. Other: ___						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The use of chemicals to treat fish diseases is occasionally required in hatchery settings. The site is currently free of fish diseases and it is extremely important that no diseases are transported to the facility. State law requires the approval of the State Fish Health Specialist for transfer of fish products to the facility. Imported eggs can be treated before introduction to the facility. Even though no fish diseases have been identified at the site, iodine and formulin may be used in low concentrations during hatching and early rearing as a preventative measure. Chemicals, if used, will be appliedat dilution concentrations in compliance with state regulation.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?			X			Family will move to nearby homesite
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X			Public viewing of the facility may increase
f. Other: ___						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The private residence on the Forest Lease will be converted to office space for daily visits by hatchery personnel. Future plans for an educational interpretive site will likely increase public viewing of the facility (A separate MEPA document will be filed for any future improvements at the site).

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:			X			Administrative change only
b. Have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?			X			State will no longer pay rent for use of the site
c. Result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Result in increased used of any energy source?			X			Heat source will be needed in the Hatchery Building
e. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

a. The USFWS is currently operating the facility as cooperator under the Hungry Horse Mitigation Program. This involves daily visits by one hatchery employee. Other than infrequent visits by mitigation personnel for maintenance, cleaning and minor improvements, the existing arrangement for government services is not expected to change.

b. The state is currently paying $600 to $1200 per month to hatch and rear westslope cutthroat at the site. Federal dollars will be used to purchase the improvements for the state so that rent will no longer be required. Hungry Horse Mitigation funding will pay for operation and maintenance.

d. The hatchery building is currently unheated. When a heat source is added and operated, additional energy (i.e. gas, oil or electricity) will be used

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				Site will be improved by removing junk etc.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (continued)

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural or historic values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

This EA covers ownership change and operation of the site as it has been operated historically. A change from non-native rainbow to native westslope cutthroat trout rearing is a positive change.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE **Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:**	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Transfer to state ownership will allow for the investment of Hungry Horse Mitigation funding to protect and restore natural features at the site. Any future actions must be addressed in additional or supplemental MEPA/NEPA documents. All future actions are contingent on the the purchase of these improvements and the successful negotiation of the Forest Service Lease and Special Use Permit.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (Continued)

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative 1. No action. FWP will not purchase the improvements and the site will be put on the market for purchase by another willing buyer. In this case, FWP would not be able to invest Hungry Horse Mitigation dollars for habitat restoration and low density rearing of wild westslope cutthroat trout.

Alternative 2. Purchase improvements and lease the land. This would protect future investments and allow FWP to create natural habitat for spawning and rearing of wild cutthroat by connecting access to the Flathead River. Wild genetic stocks could be reared

in natural habitat as an egg source for mitigation activities throughout the Flathead System. Once a naturalized run is established at the site, surplus migrating wild fish can be used as an egg source. Alternative egg sources eliminate the need to obtain gametes from wild spawners that we are trying to protect. The site offers a unique setting for a state-of-the-art combination of new hatchery techniques and habitat restoration.

Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Water quality assessments must pass inspection by FWP and DEQ. Fish health inspections must pass the State Fish Health Specialist. Genetic testing will be completed by FWP and MSU genetics lab.

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

No. This is an administrative change only.

Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

This project has undergone public review via news paper announcement, review by the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority, project review process and review by the Northwest Power Planning Council.

Duration of comment period if any:

14 Days

Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:

Brian Marotz
Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks
490 North Meridian
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 751-4546

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This project complements management and mitigation actions being carried out by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. At a minimum, if the FWP purchased the improvements, Special Use Permit and Forest Service lease and took no further actions, native fish in the Flathead Basin would be enhanced by eliminating a source of non-native rainbow trout that could hybridize with cutthroat or compete with other trout species.

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION